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## THE NEWSPAPERS OF RUSH COUNTY

By JOHN F. MOSES, Former Editor of the *Rushville Republican*,  
Rushville, Indiana

Rush county's first printer, publisher and editor was William D. M. Wickham. By the very few now living who knew him he is remembered as a tall, angular man, of eccentric manners and speech. According to the late Dr. John Arnold (long an authority on local history), Mr. Wickham issued the first number of a little paper, about ten by twelve inches in size, at Rushville, either late in 1822 or early in 1823, under the whimsical title of the *Dog Fennel Gazette*. This was very soon after the organization of Rush county. Although it is said to have been published for several years, no copies are known to be in existence at this time. Dr. Arnold describes the printing press as the top of a sycamore stump. The impression was made with a lever—a sapling let into a mortise in a tree which stood close beside the stump. Another version of the story is that the printer secured his “power” at the corner of a stout rail fence. Later, Wickham built himself a better machine of timbers, which he humorously called “Wickham’s Velocity Press.” The home and printing office were under the same roof.

Mr. Wickham made a second venture with the *True American*, the first number of which is dated September 17, 1831. This was a four-column folio, with columns 12 inches long, and was printed on a sheet 13 by 21½ inches in size. In his “salutatory” the editor admits a Jacksonian bias, but promises to “meddle with politics very sparingly,” and to give his patrons “the best reading obtainable, including Foreign and Domestic Intelligence, Legislative and Congressional Proceedings, Miscellany, and the production of the Muse.” A three-line notice of a meeting of the Circuit Court is the sole item of local news in this first issue; but the advertisements afford a glimpse of the life of the village. These represent one merchant, a druggist, a milliner, a shoemaker, two lawyers, a militia muster, a local lottery and a stray horse. Subscriptions were invited on a sliding scale commencing with one dollar a year,

cash in advance. Any kind of "merchantable produce" was a good tender.

The *True American* does not seem to have prospered, for under date of January 5, 1833, Mr. Wickham brought out the *Rushville Gazette* as "a continuation of the *True American*." The columns of the new paper were four inches longer than those of the old one, but they soon shrank to the same length. The sheet was much too large for the printed pages, leaving great margins, which excited mirth among "envious contemporaries." On one occasion when Mr. Wickham's pages were full and he printed the report of a local election on the margin of his paper, their gibes provoked an interchange of heated and uncomplimentary remarks. Reference is made in the first number of the *Gazette* to "many attempts and frequent failures to establish a press in Rushville"; but names of other papers, if there were others, are not mentioned.

The next paper in order, the *Indiana Herald and Rushville Gazette*, was probably the direct successor of the *Rushville Gazette*, as its name is included in that of the new paper. This was a folio with six wide columns to the page. It shows good work, both editorially and mechanically, and was Whig in politics. Its founders were Samuel Davis of Covington, Kentucky, and Thomas Wallace of Chillicothe, Ohio, who met as printers in Cincinnati, and there formed a friendship which led to this venture. Their first number bears the date of March 7, 1835. The publication was continued by them until December, 1839, when Corydon Donnavan became owner. Mr. Davis returned to Covington, his former home. Mr. Wallace remained in Rushville, served two terms as county treasurer, and afterwards returned to the newspaper business. In 1862, he laid aside his work one "press day," to enlist in the 16th Indiana Infantry. He died in the army some six months later.

Mr. Donnavan, the new proprietor, changed both the name of the paper and its politics, issuing his first number December 13, 1839, as Volume I, No. 1, of the *Hoosier and Rushville Democratic Archive*, with appropriate politics. Its history will be given farther on.

The Whigs being thus left without an organ, Pleasant A. Hackleman, a leading lawyer of Rushville, joined with his brother, Oliver C. Hackleman, and on the 25th of April, 1840, brought out the *Rushville Whig*. New material was shipped from Cincinnati to

Laurel by canal and wagoned from there to Rushville, which had no railroad at that time. P. A. Hackleman was editor and made the paper a force in Indiana politics. In April, 1843, the property passed into the hands of R. F. Brown. P. A. Hackleman, who continued as editor, was an orator and writer of great power. He served as clerk of Rush county, was one of Lincoln's Peace Commissioners at the outbreak of the Civil War, afterwards Colonel of the 16th Indiana Regiment, and had reached the rank of Brigadier-General when he was killed in battle at Corinth, Mississippi. His brother Oliver spent most of his remaining years as a farmer. The Rush County Farmers' Insurance Association, which he organized, is a monument to his foresight, courage and public spirit. He died in Rushville at an advanced age.

R. F. Brown sold the *Whig* in 1846 to Granville Cowing and Norval W. Cox, two young Rushville printers, who changed its name to the *True Republican*, but continued it as a strong Whig paper, with General Hackleman as editor. After his newspaper days ended, Mr. Cowing held a position in the United States Treasury Department at Washington. For many years he has lived at Muncie, devoting himself to horticulture. Mr. Cox moved to Kansas, was a member of the Leavenworth City Council, and served with credit in a Kansas regiment in the Civil War. He finally settled in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he was for six years clerk of the Arkansas Supreme Court, for seventeen years clerk of the Little Rock school board and was Grand Master of the Arkansas Odd-Fellows one term. He died in 1896. Very little is known to the present writer about R. F. Brown after his leaving Rushville. At the close of 1884, while he was publishing the St. Paris (O.) *Dispatch*, his office burned, and he was seeking another location.

From this time on, frequent changes of owners mark the fluctuating fortunes of the early Rushville newspapers. In 1848, the names of T. Wallace & G. Cowing succeeded those of G. Cowing & N. W. Cox as publishers of the *True Republican*. In 1850-51, the firm name was T. Wallace and D. M. Bell. Three changes occurred in 1852. Thomas Wallace had it in May; D. M. Bell & Co. followed in September; and in October the editor was the late George C. Clark, for many years afterwards President of the Rushville National Bank. Before the end of the year, the paper suspended, having reached its 17th volume (including the *Whig*.)

On the 5th of January, 1853, the *True Republican* reappeared under the capable management of A. M. Cowing and Thomas J. Kemper, who started off with Vol. I, No. 1, of a new series. In 1854, these gentlemen changed the name to the *Rushville Republican*. In 1855, Nathan Shadinger bought Kemper's interest, and the style changed to A. M. Cowing & Co. In July of the same year, A. M. Cowing sold his interest to Lycurgus J. Cox and William J. Cowing and the name of the firm became Shadinger, Cox & Cowing. In 1856, they changed the name to the *Rushville Weekly Republican*. In 1859, Mr. Shadinger dropped out. During the Civil War he entered the Union service and was an officer in a negro regiment. His two partners successfully continued the business under the name of Cox & Cowing until October 24, 1860, when Andrew Hall bought the office.

William J. Cowing removed to Washington City, to take a position in the Agricultural Department and becoming financially interested in the street railways of that city, made his home there to the end of his life.

Mr. Hall, who came next in order, had lived in Kansas during the stirring period of the Kansas-Nebraska troubles and had actively supported the Free-State movement. The management of the *Republican* rested on him during the trying first three years of the Civil War. The pinch of war-time conditions caused him to reduce the size of the paper for part of the time. He retired March 16, 1864, but re-engaged in the newspaper business at Kentland, Indiana, served as clerk of Newton county and died there.

His successor was L. J. Cox, who put off the editorial harness again June 21, 1865. Mr. Cox spent all his life in Rushville, which was his native town.

Lieut. Winfield S. Conde, home from honorable service in the 52d Indiana Infantry, succeeded him. January 3, 1866, William H. Shumm became a partner. He took over the whole business January 22, 1868, with Alexander B. Campbell as editor and continued until September 9, 1868. The name of George W. Bates appeared as local editor at one time. All of these men are dead except Mr. Conde, who still lives near Rushville. During the whole of the Civil War the *Republican* ardently supported the Union cause.

Drebert & Harrison, of Connersville, bought the *Republican* October 6, 1869. Harrison's name was dropped June 4, 1872.

Frank T. Drebert was a good printer and an editorial writer of unusual ability. He sold the office to Charles W. Stivers, of Liberty, Indiana, August 17, 1876. For many years afterwards he published papers at Owatonna and Chatfield, Minnesota, and died in that state.

At the end of six months Mr. Stivers sold the *Republican* to John F. Moses, of Huntington, Indiana (Feb. 1, 1877.) As already stated, Rush county's first newspaper was printed on a home-made press. For nearly half a century following, its successors were laboriously "worked off" on the old Washington hand press, then in general use, at a speed of about 200 sheets an hour. In the summer of 1879, the *Republican* put in a hand cylinder press, the first in the county, which would hardly meet present day needs; but people used to crowd the press room on publication days, to see the new machine turn off 700 or 800 sheets an hour.

April 1, 1881, Mr. Moses sold the *Republican* to Capt. Ulysses D. Cole, of Indianapolis, with whom he had formerly been associated in the publication of the Huntington *Herald*. Henry Holt, later of the Franklin *Republican*, and for many years past an attorney in Indianapolis, was Mr. Cole's local editor. He was succeeded by Carl R. Martin, afterwards founder of papers at Roslyn and Clellum, Washington. In 1882, Mr. Moses resumed editorial work on the *Republican*, and bought a half interest in the property January 1, 1884. At that time the firm name was changed to the Republican Company, which it still bears. Captain Cole was an excellent newspaper man, retired in 1887, in bad health, and died several years ago. Jacob Feudner acquired an interest in the property January 24, 1884. The *Republican*, which had been a six-column quarto for several years, was made a semi-weekly in 1891. Mr. Moses retired April 1, 1903, having been editor of the *Republican* for 26 years. Jacob Feudner, who then became owner of the property, still carries on the business. He started the daily edition in 1904. At different times, Will G. McVey, John Rutledge, Edward Hancock, Claude Simpson, Clifford Lee, Thomas J. Geraghty, B. O. Simpson, Allen Hiner and Roy Harrold have done reportorial work on the paper, the last-named being still in office.

What goes before traces in outline the fortunes of the Rushville *Whig* and its successor, the Rushville *Republican*, from the beginning to the present time. The Democratic chronology is as follows:

As already indicated, Rush county's first three newspapers—the *Dog Fennel Gazette*, the *True American* and the *Rushville Gazette*—all founded and published by Wm. D. Wickham, were Democratic in their sympathies. The fourth paper in the succession—the *Indiana Herald and Rushville Gazette*—established by Davis & Wallace in 1835 as a Whig paper, was sold to Corydon Donnavan in 1840. He changed its name to the *Hoosier and Rushville Democratic Archive*, and put it in line with Democratic policies.

In 1845, the property came into the hands of Samuel S. Bratton, who at once dropped the inconvenient title and issued his first number as Vol. I, No. 1, of the *Jacksonian*, a name which it still bears. The lack of complete files makes it necessary to trace ownership and editorship at some periods by stray copies of the paper.

From October 16, 1850, to February 22, 1854, George W. Hargitt published the paper under the name of the *Indiana Jacksonian*. April 12, 1855, it appears as the *Rushville Jacksonian*, with B. Burns as editor, and John L. Robinson as corresponding editor. Mr. Robinson, who was a native of Rush county, afterwards achieved much distinction in his party. He was county clerk, a member of Congress and U. S. marshal for Indiana. For years he was very influential in shaping his party's policies in Indiana. October 29, 1850, B. Burns and D. M. Bell controlled the *Jacksonian*. From October 22, 1858, to October 20, 1859, it carried the name of Robert J. Price, and suspended on the date last named. It reappeared December 23, 1859, with Thomas Wallace as publisher and John L. Robinson and Ethelbert C. Hibben as editors. A month later Mr. Robinson was sole proprietor and publisher. Robert J. Price and Thomas Marlatt succeeded him October 5th, that year. On the 4th of April, 1861, William A. Cullen and Cyrus Crawford took charge, the former as editor. August 21st, following, Rodney L. Davis supplanted Mr. Crawford and the paper appeared as Vol. I, No. 1, of a new series. Mr. Cullen was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the 123d Indiana Infantry (mustered into service March 9, 1864), and identified himself with the Republican party until 1896. He was probate and circuit judge, served in both houses of the Legislature and was for many years a leading member of the Rush county bar.

The *Jacksonian* opposed the war for the Union, and the party divided on war issues. Patronage fell off and the paper suspended

publication—for how long it does not appear. But in order to revive it the local party leaders raised money for a new equipment by organizing a stock company, selling shares in all parts of the county. Robert S. Sproule was employed as publisher and editor. His first issue, dated July 7, 1862, was numbered Vol. I, No. 1, of another new series. Files are lacking to show how long this arrangement continued; but Elsberry H. Perkins was in control November 18, 1863. Later, Mr. Perkins removed to Indianapolis and for thirty years or more held a responsible position with the *Daily News*.

There seems to have been another suspension, for on August 31, 1865, the paper reappeared with an announcement by Cyrus Crawford, that he had "commenced its republication," which he did by starting off with No. 1, Vol. I, of still another series, the file extending only to the middle of the following December.

The next file accessible shows that John S. Campbell was in possession from November, 1867, to October 27, 1869. He had kept a bookstore in Rushville, afterwards removing to Greensburg, and spent his remaining years there. James Moody & Company succeeded him. Their editor was Finley Bigger, Sr., a son of former Governor Samuel Bigger and a member of the bar at Rushville, who had been Register of the U. S. Treasury under President Buchanan. Another suspension occurred November 17, 1870. A month later the paper started up again under the management of Moody & Conde. In 1871-72, W. S. Conde was publisher. Still another suspension occurred in January, 1873. In May of that year, William E. Wallace, son of Thomas Wallace, an early local publisher, took an interest in partnership with Mr. Conde. This arrangement was of brief duration, for a few week's later (July 24, 1873), the property was bought by George H. Puntenney, attorney, and W. E. Wallace, who, in partnership or separately, owned and successfully managed it for the following thirty-four years. Both were natives of Rush county, and both good newspaper men. Mr. Puntenney was editor of the paper for twenty-seven consecutive years. Puntenney & Wallace established the *Daily Jacksonian* July 25, 1895. William S. Meredith was local editor for seven years from 1900, and Thomas A. Geraghty for a long period. In 1897, Mr. Puntenney bought out his partner and in 1900 Mr. Wallace repurchased the entire property. In 1907, the Democrat Publishing Com-



pany was organized and bought the *Jacksonian*, the *Graphic*, the *Daily Star*, and the *Independent*, and merged them all into one paper under the name of the *Democrat*, published daily and weekly. Will L. Newbold was president of the new company. Melvin Rector, Robert M. Gibson and Thomas Geraghty were editorial writers at different times. The plan did not succeed. Democrats missed the historic old name of the *Jacksonian*, and the managers found the organization too expensive to keep up. Finally, on the 15th of July, 1909, the paper and plant were sold to Will L. Newbold and George H. Puntenney, Jr., the latter a son of the former editor. These gentlemen restored the old name and the *Daily* and *Weekly Jacksonian* have since appeared under their management. Elgar Higgs has been reporter for a number of years.

This brings the history of the local Democratic press in outline down to the present time.

The Rushville *Times*, an independent weekly paper, was brought out by Lucian W. Norris, April 12, 1870. Its publication cannot be traced beyond the following October.

About March, 1877, George W. Bates and Albert Bunting started the Rushville *Telegraph*, using a plant furnished by Charles W. Stivers. The paper was discontinued after a few months.

The Rushville *Graphic* was established July 1, 1882, by Dr. Samuel W. McMahan and George W. Campbell, attorney. It was a six-column quarto, Republican in politics, published weekly. A prominent feature for some years was a department devoted to the interests of light-harness horse breeders, then of some importance in the county. In 1886, Mr. Campbell sold his interest to John K. Gowdy, and McMahan & Gowdy were owners until 1893; but Butler & Newby, as lessees, published the paper in 1891, and Gowdy & Newby, in 1892 and part of 1893. June 17, 1893, Harry E. Manor, of Alexandria, Indiana, bought the paper and took charge. Of his predecessors, Dr. McMahan purchased an interest in the *Western Horseman*, at Indianapolis, removed to that city, and died there. Mr. Gowdy, who still resides in Rushville, was twice sheriff of Rush county, twice county auditor, served as Republican State Chairman and was consul-general to France, a position to which he was appointed by President McKinley. Mr. Campbell is a practicing attorney at Rushville. The *Graphic* plant was damaged by fire, October 23, 1893, and sold to Samuel J. Finney, who resumed its

publication December 15, 1893, and later made it a semi-weekly. Mr. Finney associated Dr. George B. Jones with him July 10, 1895, and in June, 1896, retired, leaving Dr. Jones as publisher. F. C. and D. D. Hazelrigg, of Greensburg, had the property six months, and Joe M. Taylor, of Indianapolis, for one month, when Mr. Finney came into possession again. January 1, 1901, he sold out to Walter Kaler and T. A. Geraghty. The former retired during the year, leaving Mr. Geraghty as publisher. The latter issued from the same office the *Daily Star*, which he had previously started. From November, 1902, to 1907, the two editions were published by the Star-Graphic Company, when they were bought by the Democrat Publishing Company and merged with the Rushville *Democrat*.

In 1886, E. C. Charles started a four-page weekly paper at Carthage, called the Carthage *Clarion*. Politically it was Republican. A few years later he sold his subscription list to the Rushville *Graphic*, and discontinued the *Clarion*. Later he began the publication of another paper there under the title of the *Carthaginian*. This paper was published for some years afterwards as the Carthage *Record* by William Allan, whose death caused its suspension. Publication was resumed by Chester G. Hill, into whose hands the property came next. The plant was nearly destroyed by fire, and the paper stopped again in consequence. After the lapse of some months he once more revived the paper as the Carthage *Citizen*, with Miss Florence B. Hunt as editor, an arrangement which still continues.

The pioneer paper at Milroy was the *Advertiser*, a four-page non-partisan weekly, founded by Charles H. Pollitt in 1882. He was succeeded by Marcus Fisher and George W. Rowe, in turn. During this period the name was changed to the *Times* and the *News*. Dates are not available. It was finally suspended, and revived as the Milroy *Press* by Harry O. Matthews in 1895. After him, John P. Stech, present city treasurer of Rushville, was publisher from August, 1896. He was succeeded by F. Curtis Green, who was publisher until about 1910, when it was sold to Clyde Archey, the present owner and editor.

George S. Jones, a teacher, published the Manilla *Mail* for some time in the '90s, but the paper was printed in Indianapolis.

The Rushville *American* was established November 22, 1894, as a small four-page weekly by James E. Naden, who has been its only

owner. In 1902 it was enlarged to eight pages and in 1909 was made a semi-weekly. The *American* supported the **Republican** party until 1912, when it took part with the Progressives.

In 1904, John Rutledge began the publication of the Rushville *Independent*, weekly, and continued it until 1907, when it was bought by the Democrat Publishing Company and discontinued.